

Coldwater Fisheries Management Plan



**New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Fish and Wildlife
Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries**

James E. McGreevey
Governor

Bradley M. Campbell
Commissioner



State of New Jersey

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Introduction

New Jersey's coldwater streams and lakes come in a variety of shapes and sizes and offer an array of habitats for animal, plant and microbial life. Fish species such as trout, that inhabit waters with relatively cold temperatures, 4 –15°C (40-60°C), are often referred to as coldwater fishes. The emphasis in this plan is placed on managing salmonid (trout) fisheries because they are widely recognized as indicators of high water quality and are important recreational game fish. Efforts to conserve, protect, and manage trout and their habitats are beneficial not only to other aquatic organisms that co-exist with trout, but to downstream biotic communities as well.

The New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife is the primary agency entrusted with protecting and managing the state's fish and wildlife. Trout management in New Jersey dates back to the late 1800's when the New Jersey Fish Commission planned to re-stock natural trout streams believed to have been decimated by a severe drought. The state's first fish hatchery was constructed in 1912 to produce trout in response to a growing demand. Since that humble beginning, trout management within the state has evolved into efforts to protect water quality and in-stream habitat from widespread development and enhance seasonal and year round trout fishing opportunities for anglers through two modern fish culture facilities. Anglers help support agency research and management activities through the purchase of fishing licenses. While many of the Division's management efforts benefit the angler, the state's eight million residents also reap the benefits of resource protection and preservation efforts. In addition, the pursuit of freshwater fishing in New Jersey generates over 138 million dollars annually into the state's economy.

Despite the long history and evolution of trout management within the state there has never been a long term, strategic plan formulated to address the myriad of issues surrounding the state's fragile coldwater resources. The lack of long range goals and objectives leads to a "reactionary" approach to fisheries management. Considering that New Jersey is the fourth smallest state in the union, the most densely populated, and is currently undergoing rapid changes in land uses the development of such a plan is crucial to providing for the long term protection of coldwater resources and providing for its most optimal use. The plan also coincides with the Department's on-going initiative in protecting the state's waterways. This initiative most recently resulted in substantially increasing buffers on trout production streams through changes in Stormwater Management rules. These rules, the most comprehensive and protective of any state's, protect the water quality and critical habitat of important indicator species such as trout.

For the first time an information base pertaining to New Jersey's trout resources has been compiled into one reference document. This information will be useful to a broad audience that includes resource managers and regulators, anglers, conservation organizations, and landowners. Not only does this plan document the evolution of trout management practices over the last century, but it also identifies coldwater issues, goals and strategies in the areas of fish culture, habitat protection, fish health, regulations and stocking practices. Most importantly, it also provides a mechanism for implementing

these strategies by establishing an operational plan. This plan is not static and should be considered a work in progress, subject to change as warranted by changes in environmental or social pressures on New Jersey's coldwater resources, or advances in fisheries management techniques.